

МУСА БИГИЕВ: ЖИЗНЬ И ИДЕЯ РЕФОРМЫ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

В данной статье рассматривается деятельность Мусы Бигиева в области реформирования системы образования. Две первые части статьи отражают жизнь ученого в соответствии с его опытом обучения через мусульманское слово, чтобы продемонстрировать причины его призыва к образовательным реформам. В статье говорится, что на протяжении всей своей научной жизни, Бигиев подчеркивал роль образования в формировании личности и реформирования мусульманского общества. В последней части статьи описывается вклад Бигиева в развитие образовательной системы.

Ключевые слова: *Муса Бигиев, образование, национальная школа.*

This short paper discusses the emphasis of Musa Bigiev on the importance of reforming the educational system. The first two parts of the paper highlights the life of the scholar in line with his learning experiences throughout the Muslim word to demonstrate the reasons for his call for educational reforms. As paper suggests, throughout his scholarly life, Bigiev emphasized on the role of education in forming individuals and reforming the Muslim society. The last part of the paper discusses the solutions of Bigiev to change the situation in education.

Key words: *Musa Bigiev, educational, national school.*

Musa Jarullah Bigiev (1875-1949) is celebrated as one of the most significant scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century's intellectual society of Russia's Muslims. He was a Muslim Tatar religious scholar, journalist, politician, educator and a prolific writer, who devoted his life to reconciling Islam with modern progress. He published sixty four books majority of which were written in Arabic. These works deal with issues of Islamic jurisprudence, theology, sciences of the Qur'an, sciences of the hadith, literature, economics, law, politics and history. Bigiev also wrote in Tatar and these works addressed the religious, social, educational and political life of Russian Muslims. Despite the fact that this scholar was very famous among his contemporary Muslims in Russia, Turkey, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent and Central Asia, his life, intellectual output and even the name are essentially unknown to the majority of modern Muslim and Western scholars. This paper is a tiny attempt to study Bigiev's contribution to the linguistic developments and educational system.

Life and Times

Bigiev was born in 1875 in Novo-Cherkassk, a Russian city near Rostov-on-Don. His father, Yarullah, who belonged to a wealthy family from the village of Kikino, Penza province, died when Musa was only six years old. Musa's mother, Fati-

mah, a daughter of the principal of the Kikino madrasah, strove to raise her two sons, Zahir and Musa, as religious scholars. Rostov-on-Don was inhabited mostly by ethnic Russians and was a business centre and not conducive for Islamic learning. Consequently, in 1888 Bigiev's mother sent him to the city of Kazan, where he enrolled in the most famous local religious schools of that time, Apanay and Husainiya madrasahs. Two years later, Bigiev returned to Rostov-on-Don and completed his studies at the Rostov-on-Don Real Technical lyceum. Then he went to Central Asia, particularly to Bukhara and Samarqand. Unable to satisfy his religious curiosity in the educational system prevalent in Central Asia, Bigiev journeyed to the Middle East in search of religious knowledge. Bigiev's biographer Alimcan el-Idrisi pointed out that Bigiev did not rely upon the existing madrasahs (religious institutions) prevalent in the Muslim world. Instead, he studied on his own but benefited from the scholarship of famous scholars [1]. In Egypt, Bigiev studied under Shaykh Mu'ammad Bakhit al-Muti'i (d. 1935), one of the most influential scholars of the country, a student and follower of the ideas of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) and a close friend of Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905). Bigiev also attended public lectures given by Abduh. In Egypt, he also spent considerable time at the National Library researching the history of Qur'anic studies. Later, he went to Makkah to perform hajj (pilgrimage) and stayed there for two years studying the Qur'an and the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Thereafter, he travelled to India, and spent about a year in Uttar Pradesh, where he learnt Sanskrit to have a deeper understanding of the Hindu scripture, the Mahabharata.

In 1904 Bigiev returned to Rostov-on-Don where, the following year, he married Asma Aliye Khanim, a daughter of Shaykh Zakir Efende who was an imam and religious teacher in a small town called Chistay. The same year Bigiev moved to Saint Petersburg and joined the Law Faculty at a local university. Having a sound understanding of tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis) and fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), according to Azade-Ayse Rorlich, Bigiev «wanted to acquire the knowledge necessary to compare the Islamic and Western legal systems» [2] Bigiev's move to St. Petersburg coincided with the Russian Revolution of 1905, which ended with «The Manifesto of 17th October,» a document proclaiming the freedom of the press, political activities and religious practices for all Russian people, including the Muslim community. In St. Petersburg, Bigiev joined political independence movements of Russian Muslims, who tried to benefit from the «piece of liberalism and freedom» provided by the Tsarist Regime under the pressure of revolutionary upheavals. A Turkish scholar Ahmet Kanlidere, stated that Bigiev's active interest in the political sphere started as a result of the strong influence of his pan-Islamist friend Abd Rashid Ibrahimov [3]. In 1905, they together founded the *Ulfet* newspaper to which Bigiev contributed regular articles. Other than *Ulfet*, Bigiev wrote many articles on numerous religious, educational, political, social, and moral issues for several Tatar, Turkish and Egyptian periodicals and newspapers like Shura, al-Islah, Waqt, Islam Dünyasi, Sabil al-Rashad, Türk Yürdü and Al-Manar.

Meanwhile, Bigiev was active in organising the All Russian Muslim Conferences during 1905-1917, which aimed at unifying all Russian Muslims under one body and finding solutions for the immediate social, religious, educational and political problems of Muslims under Russian colonialism. Bigiev regularly supplied information to Russian Muslims about these conferences. During 1904 and 1905 alone, Bigiev wrote ten articles in *Ulfet* newspaper, explaining the rationale and achievements of the conferences. His activities for the conferences did not constrain Bigiev from performing his duties as a Central Committee member of the party of *Russiya Musulmannarining Ittifaqi* (Union of Russian Muslims) during 1906-1917. In 1915, Bigiev published his *Islahat Asaslar* (Fundamentals of Reform), a comprehensive reference book on political and social developments among Russian Muslims during 1904-1915.

In 1913, three books by Bigiev, namely, *Rahmat Ilahiye Borhannari* (Evidence on the Mercy of God), *Insannarning Aqidah Ilahiyatlarena Ber Nazar* (A Glimpse on the People's Belief in God) and *Ozin Konnarda Ruza: Ijtihad Kitabi* (Fasting during Long Days: A Book of Ijtihad) were banned by Mustafa Sabri, Shaykh al-Islam of the Ottoman Empire due to Bigiev's non-traditional approach to some theological and jurisprudential issues. In these books Bigiev declared that all religions belong to Allah (SWT), and all people, regardless of their religion, will eventually be forgiven by Him. Because of this opinion, Bigiev was condemned by some Russian Muslim intellectuals, especially Qadimist (traditionalist) whose mouthpiece, the weekly *Din va Ma'ishat* (Religion and Life), contained, in the first quarter of 1910, more than forty essays condemning Bigiev as a «heretic» and a «non-believer» (kafir) [4].

Despite opposition from the Ottoman officials and some local religious scholars, by the October Revolution of 1917, Bigiev became one of the most significant and widely respected scholars among Russian and Turkish Muslims. A Russian scholarly journal *Mir Islama* (The Muslim World) published several articles demonstrating the development of a situation around the name of Bigiev, and considered the publication of his books as of great significance to the Muslim world: «Works of Musa Bigiev suddenly became an object of special attention. Ideas of the Tatar philosopher began to spread more and more among the Constantinople Muslims. His courageous critique of traditional interpretations began to please many.» [5]

Bigiev welcomed the Russian February Revolution of 1917 claiming, perhaps naively, that «slavery is gone, and will never return back.» [6] When the Bolsheviks came to power following the October Revolution, his confidence in freedom for Russian Muslims did not decrease. The new regime had issued «A Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia» (October 26, 1917), which proclaimed the equality and sovereignty of the peoples living in Russia and confirmed their right to self-determination. Consequently, Bigiev saw a great opportunity for Russian Muslims to become independent from imperialistic policies of the Russian colonialism. He considered the Soviet regime a potential ally of Muslims against the British Em-

pire, the main enemy of the entire Muslim ummah. During November-December of 1919, when the Russian Civil War was at its peak and the future of the new Bolshevik regime was threatened, Bigiev, together with an Indian pan-Islamist writer and political activist Mawlana Muhammad Barakatullah (1859-1927), went to the Volga region to mobilise local Muslims against the British Empire. In his book *Hatun*, Bigiev mentioned that he was in close contact with a number of Indian political activists like Mawlana Barakatullah, Mawlana 'Ubaydullah, Abu Sa'd al-'Arabi, Mawlana 'Abdurabb, Mawlana 'Abd al-Jabbar, Mawlana 'Abd al-Sattar and Raja Purta [7]. These activists were heartily received by the Soviet regime and allowed to live in Russia during the years of the civil war due to their anti-British stance.

However, the friendly relations between Muslims and the Bolshevik regime were short-lived. The civil war ended in 1920 with the establishment of the undisputed authority of the Soviet regime in Russia as well as in Muslim populated territories of the Volga-Ural region, Caucasian area and Central Asia. The Communist authorities have been doing everything in their power to liquidate pan-Islam as an international ideology competing with their own. To the Communists, Islam was loathsome as it is a religion that abhorred atheism. The Tenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in March 1921, adopted a resolution defining both pan-Islam and pan-Turkism as sources of deviation from Communism towards bourgeois democratic nationalism and their accusations were repeated often subsequently. The charges of deviation were meant to justify the subsequent liquidation of pan-Islamists.

This antagonistic attitude of the Soviet government towards pan-Islamism, however, did not deter Bigiev from struggling for the unification of Russian Muslims with the Islamic world. During the All Russian Muslim Congress at Ufa, during September 16-20, 1920, he declared that officially the Russian Muslims owed allegiance to the caliphate. This was repeated in an essay entitled *The Address to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Müracaat)*, where he called on the Assembly to preserve the institution of the caliphate and its leader, Mustafa Kemal, to assume the position of a caliph for all Muslims. In this work, Bigiev argued that communism was a bigger enemy of Muslims than the British Empire. In 1921, Bigiev managed to give a copy of the work to Ismail Subhi Soysallioglu, a member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, who at that time had been visiting Central Asia. Ismail Subhi personally handed over this appeal to Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who had abolished the institution of the caliphate in 1924.

The conflict between Bigiev and the Soviet regime ensued with the publication of his *Islam Milletlerine (To Muslim Nations)*, which is also well known under the name of *Islamning Elifbasi (The Alphabet of Islam)* written in 1920 in response to *The Alphabet of Communism (1919)* of Nikolai Bukharin, the main theorist of the Communist identity. Some 5,000 copies of *Islam Milletlerine* were reprinted in Berlin in 1923. Two months later, due to his criticism of the Marxist ideology, Bigiev was arrested by the Cheka in Saint Petersburg but was later released under the pres-

sure from International Muslim communities [8]. In 1926 Bigiev attended International Islamic Conferences at Cairo and Makkah, as one of the seven elected Russian delegates. On the way back he stopped at Ankara, attended several sessions of the Turkish Parliament and met the Turkish Minister of International Affairs, Taufiq Bey, and the Prime Minister, Ismat Pasha.

Feeling threatened by Bigiev's activities for gaining independence of Russian Muslims from the Russian colonisation, Russian authorities disallowed Bigiev to leave the country. Bigiev's life was in danger as after the death of Lenin political repressions increased enormously. The person who was considered a great Russian hero for mobilising famous Muslim political activist to fight for the Soviet cause came to be labeled a «nationalist,» «Islamist,» «spy of Turkey and India» and the «enemy of the Soviet Regime.»

In Exile

In 1930, Bigiev crossed the border, in secrecy, from the Soviet Union into Chinese Turkistan and moved to Kashgar. He sought to settle down in that city and teach at one of its madrasahs (religious schools), but the Chinese government did not permit him to do so [9]. After four months of traveling on horseback, Bigiev was able to cross the Pamir Mountains to Afghanistan, where he was welcomed by its ruler, Nadir Shah, who provided him with an international passport [10]. Afterwards, Bigiev went to India, and met his friends from the early years. Later, he travelled to Egypt and published his work *The Address to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey* in 1931.

According to the Finnish scholar Antero Leitzinger, Bigiev gave a speech at a pan-Islamic World Congress in Jerusalem in 1931, where he praised the Finns for their friendly attitude toward Russian Muslims who had to emigrate from Russia after the Revolution of 1917 [11]. In 1932, Bigiev attended the First Turkish History Congress in Ankara. It is also known that in 1933 Bigiev founded an Islamic Publishing House in Berlin with the intention of transforming it into «a religio-scientific Islamic Centre uniting all European Muslim intellectuals.» The following year Bigiev visited Finland for a second time and from there he went to Iran and Iraq to learn about the situation of Muslims in those countries and to study the Shiite branch of Islamic belief, facing extreme difficulties. He introduced himself as a Shiite scholar and visited the large cities of Bilad al-Shi'ah (countries practicing the Shi'ah belief) like Tebriz, Tehran, Baghdad, Mosul, Najaf, Karkuk, Karbala, and Kufa. These, as he puts it, «were the journeys of education. In order to awaken minds of fuqaha', I always used small and short ideas in each of my work. My main aim was to initiate revolutionary movements in the thought of Muslims.» [12]

The major area of Bigiev's concentration was the sciences of the Qur'an, which was of particular research interest throughout his life. In one of the letters to his friend in Finland, he stated: «I made an I'tikaf at Ka'bah for more than a year, where I worked very hard to attain my objective. I was able to collect some 3,000 pages of information about al-Qur'an al-Karim. I also continued this work at libraries of Cairo for twenty months. With the will of Allah, I am planning to publish two to

three books about the Qur'an.» [13] This was the reason for him to get back to Cairo in 1935. He was one of the most significant Muslim scholars in the field of the sciences of the Qur'an. To the American Orientalist, Arthur Jeffery, Bigiev was «an Oriental savant» who had «read with me all the Shadh dh qira'at from the Old Codices and taught me many things that a Christian can hardly learn for himself.» [14] In Cairo, Bigiev published his major work on Shiite belief «Al-Washi'ah fi Naqd 'Aqa'id al-Shi'ah,» the product of his year-long trip to Iran and Iraq. The same year, he published additional three books: *Nizam al-Taqwim fi al-Islam* (System of Chronology in Islam), *Nizam al-Nasi qabla al-Islam* (System of Nasi before Islam), and *Ayyam Hayat al-Nabi* (Days from the Life of the Prophet).

In 1937, Bigiev went to India, moving from Bombay to Benares, studying Hindu Vedas. According to Bigiev, «In Benares, I became a student of great scholars of Hindu Brahmas; I was studying the oldest Vedas, i.e., revealed books of Hindu prophets, works of Indian philosophers and their wisdom.» [15] In 1938, he was invited by his friend 'Abd al-Rashid Ibrahimov to Japan. Afterwards, they together visited China, Java, Sumatra (Indonesia) and Singapore as preachers of Islam. In 1939, with the outbreak of World War II, Bigiev had to leave Japan for India and was heading for Kabul, Afghanistan. He, however, was arrested by the British in Peshawar and imprisoned for several years without any charge. The ruler of Bhopal, Muhammad Hamidullah Khan (1894-1960), managed to secure his release from the prison, but Bigiev was put under house arrest by the British until 1945. Though difficult, these were the most fruitful years of his scholarship evidenced by the publication of ten major works on different issues.

In 1946 Bigiev fell ill and had to undergo surgery several times. In such a deteriorating condition, he travelled to Turkey and returned to Cairo in 1948 in poor health. The daughter of Khedive Tawfiq, Khadijah Khanum, on learning Bigiev's condition, placed him in an old folks' home, where he had a personal assistant and a doctor. Bigiev passed away in this charitable hospice in October of 1949. The Cairo newspaper Al-Ahram published an obituary of Bigiev on October 29, 1949. He was finally laid to rest at the royal cemetery of Khidva at 'Afifah.

On Educational Reforms

Throughout his scholarly life, Musa Bigiev emphasized on the role of education in forming individuals and reforming the Muslim society. In 1920, he stated that for Russia's Muslims, there is no necessity to have a military power in order to achieve their political goals but having an army of morality is absolutely required for them in order to make a cultural burst through proper education [16].

Bigiev suggested to urgently start educational reformation in the entire Muslim world. The main concern of Bigiev on the issue of education was to keep the educational system of Russian Muslims under the control of Muslims. In his *Islamning Elifbasi* the scholar emphasized the key role of education in forming individuals and reforming the Muslim society. Therefore, he dedicated an entire chapter entitled «Clauses on the Most Important Current Issues» to the question of education. Bigiev stated that there is no necessity for Russian Muslims to have military power in order to achieve political goals, but, having an army of morality is absolutely re-

quired for them in order to make a cultural burst [17]. Accordingly, Bigiev believed that Muslims can achieve unity through a Cultural Revolution, which can only take place through proper education. Bigiev realized the miserable condition of the existing Muslim educational system and its incapacity to prepare skilled individuals who could guide masses in achieving unity. The results of the First World War and the horrors of the Russian Revolution 1917 obviously evinced all weaknesses and defects of Muslims. The most serious deficiency and disadvantage of Muslims, according to the scholar, was the absence of sciences, industry and schools, as well as absolute poverty and economic weakness. In the Soviet Union, all religious schools and madrasahs, and other educational institutions, which used to prepare religious teachers, imams and preachers, were shut down by the government in 1920s. Therefore, Bigiev acknowledged an immediate need for educated, gifted, and capable teachers and muallims in Russia as well as throughout the Muslim world. In the sphere of national necessities, there was a shortage of honest and far-sighted officials.

Bigiev also recognized the lack of strong and zealous leaders in political movements. There were no courageous and faithful mujtahids in the ranks of fighters in the sake of belief too. Then Bigiev outlined his proposal for educational reforms, which is aimed at preparing the next generation of Muslims, positively mastered secular as well as religious sciences. On the one hand, Bigiev emphasized the importance of learning modern sciences at Western education institutions; and, on the other, he called for mastering primary education, which includes religious and moral teachings, at home before entering Western institutions. Therefore, the scholar avowed the necessity of maintaining «national (milli) primary schools, religious and scientific educational institutions always, everywhere and thoroughly in our [Muslims'] administration and control.» [18]

According to the scholar, not only Russian Muslims, but, perhaps, the entire Muslim world had two pressing needs, which were, firstly, need for all branches of sciences, disciplines, industries and technologies of the West, and, secondly, need for deeper understanding of moral and religious values of Islam. Accordingly, Jārullāh offered two main solutions to solve the problem, i.e., firstly, proliferation of primary national schools based on the simple teaching methodology; and, secondly, organizing education of Muslim children of Russia in Western secondary and high schools, professional and technical colleges, and preparing them for economic activities and public administration. However, as Bigiev noticed, although Western educational institutions were capable to fulfill the first above mentioned educational need of Russian Muslims, there was no single educational institution in the West, which could provide Muslims with moral teachings of Islam and religious sciences to fulfill the second educational need of Muslims. Bigiev also recognized that teaching of such disciplines was absent in schools of Turkey, Turkistan and the Arab world too. Consequently, in order to establish education of moral and religious values of Islam, the scholar suggested setting up a research council.

Although Bigiev supported the idea of educating Muslim children in Western educational institutions, he acknowledged the potential negative influence of the

Western education system on Muslims. He also noticed that some Muslim girls, being influenced by the Western education, got married to non-Muslims. Yet Jārullāh ascribed the blame in «such tragedies» not to the Western educational system, but to an inefficient family upbringing, ill conditions of the social status of Muslims, and the absence of public morality and national schools in the Muslim lands [19].

Conclusion

This short paper demonstrated the emphasis of Bigiev on the importance of reforming the educational system in the Muslim world. Bigiev realized the impotence of existing educational system through his learning experiences and educational journeys. Musa Bigiev believed in the role of education in forming individuals and reforming the Muslim society, and blamed the educational backwardness for the decline of Muslim societies. The entire Muslim world had two pressing needs, stated him, which were, firstly, need for all branches of sciences, disciplines, industries and technologies of the West, and, secondly, need for deeper understanding of moral and religious values of Islam.

Notes

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2. «Bigi, Musa Yarullah» in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. John Esposito (USA: Oxford University Press, 1995).
3. Ahmet Kanlidere, *Kadimle Cedit Arasinda Musa Carullah* (Istanbul: Dergah Yayinlari, 2005), 37.
4. Ahmet Kanlidere, *Reform Within Islam* (Istanbul: Eren, 1997), 53.
5. See, A. Khaireddinov, «Vvedeniye,» in *Musa Jarullah Bigiev: Izbranniyi Trudy* (Kazan: Tatarskoe Kniznoe Izdatelstvo, 2005), 27.
6. Battal-Taymas, *Musa Carullah Bigi* (Istanbul: Siralar Matbaasi, 1958), 17.
7. Musa Carullah, *Hatun* (Ankara: Kitabiyat, 2001), 29.
8. Azeri, «Musa Jar Allah Efendening Taufiqi,» *Yeni Kafkazy*, 8.
9. Kanlidere, *Kadimle Cedit Arasinda*, 119.
10. M. Jarullah, *Al-Washi'ah fi Naqdi Aqaid al-Shi'ah* (Cairo: Al-Azhar Publishing House, 1984), 23.
11. Leitzinger, «Lessons from Integration of Aliens in Finland 1917-1944,» *The Eurasian Politician* [online] available from <http://www.cc.jyu.fi/~aphamala/pe/issue2/al-tartu.htm>, accessed 16 March, 2016.
12. Carullah, *Uzun Gunlerde Oruc* (Ankara: Kazan Turkleri, 1975), 11-14.
13. Ibid., 12.
14. Arthur Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937), x.
15. Carullah, *Uzun Gunlerde*, 7.
16. Jārullāh, *Islam Milletlerine*, 48-49.
17. Ibid., 39.
18. Ibid., 38.
19. Ibid., 36-41.